



## SUCCESS STORY

### Ma3an Youth Connect Local Authorities and Civil Society: Tunisian Youth Lead COVID-19 Response (Vol. 5)

**Ma3an youth in Fernana lead a variety of COVID-19 response efforts.**



Ma3an youth Sabine Boulehmi organizes community donations at a distribution center in Fernana, Tunisia.

*"I'm very optimistic about the future of Tunisia, especially given the activities we're witnessing each day. So many youth are trying to help. It's not about having impressive technical skills – even small efforts go a long way! I really hope this spirit doesn't go away!"*

–Sabrine Boulehmi, Ma3an youth

"There's one really interesting aspect about Fernana's COVID-19 response activities," said Ma3an youth Sabine Boulehmi when speaking of her volunteer work during the pandemic. "The activities that are taking place have all been proposed by youth. It's youth who are taking initiative, going to the mayor, and developing and pitching ideas to help others during the crisis. Youth are working together, youth are being proactive, and youth are leading the way."

Sabrine's own volunteer initiatives during COVID-19 speak to the proactive nature of youth in Fernana. Since news of the virus first reached her community, Sabine has supported social distancing coordination efforts outside of the post office, overseen disinfection activities for public spaces, coordinated and centralized food donations at a local primary school, remotely administered a questionnaire to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on young people's lives, and launched a small awareness campaign to share COVID-19 information.

Sabrine and her peers have also acted as a bridge between civil society and the local administration. "Before youth started taking initiative," Sabine said, "local authorities and civil society weren't coordinating – each institution was working alone. But youth involvement brought the two groups together. We gave them a reason to unite."

Speaking of Ma3an's influence on her initiatives, Sabine said: "Ma3an gave me a lot of contacts and connections with different youth, NGOs, businesses, and local authorities [through the project's multi-stakeholder gatherings]. This is the same network I'm working with today. Ma3an also supported me to become a better public speaker and helped me to talk with people different than me. [...] People all over Fernana now know me and other Ma3an youth. When we go to the community and ask for support for people in need, the community trusts us and has confidence that their donations will get to those who need them. Through Ma3an we also know who does what in the community and we can go to the right person and ask for support. [...] Ma3an put a clear map in front of me – giving me contacts, helping me understand needs, and helping me take my next steps forward."